

BATE BESONG

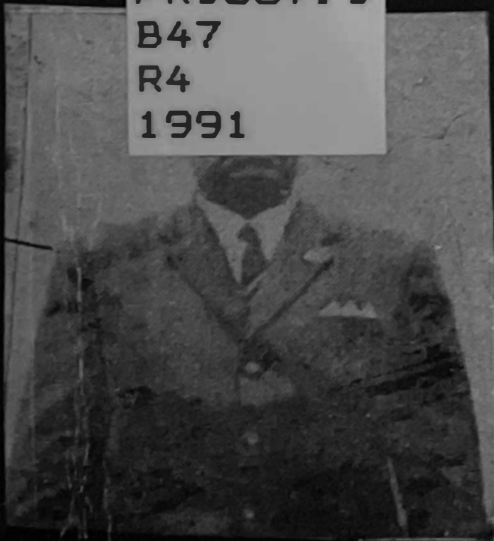
Requiem For The Last Kaiser



tho
PR9387.9
B47
R4
1991

* When Bate Besong's *
* play was performed *
* recently ... in Yaounde ... *
* some people fled in terror *
* from the hall... *

* Dr. Godfrey B. Tangwa *
* *Camercon Post.* *



Requiem For The Last Kaiser

(a drama of conscientisation and revolution)

by

Bate Besong

ere are several fine moments of dramatic irony, especially with
wer poles pitched at concentric levels thereby displaying in stark
ality, the existence of a certain class consciousness and conflict. The
al tableau with which the play ends is the very quintessence of
patre..

**- Hansel Ndumbe - Eyoh
Professor of Drama, The University of Yaounde
TRIBUNE**



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CHARACTERS

H. Baal Njunghu Akhikrikrikil:	<i>The Deity of Agidigidi</i>
Prophet A.A. Atangana:	<i>Monsignor The Marabout</i>
Françoise Hippopo: (a.k.a) Madame Patriot	<i>The People's C.F.A 1.5 billiard "Wife". and the allehuia - accordionist of the A.P.D.M. Political Bureau</i>
Harl Ngongo	<i>Iduote's frog-mouthed "laureate"</i>
Swiss Banker	
Student	
Ambassador Cracker Crookster	
Woman:	<i>aged about 37</i>
Etat-Major Andze Abessollo:	<i>Career Toe-breaker & torturer. Expected to carry out orders no matter what.</i>
Dr. Akonchong & Mallam Gambari	<i>Unemployed academics thus part-time vegetable vendors</i>
Poet as Nelson Mandela	
Minority Nnyanyen:	<i>Minister of State (Oil)</i>
Workers, Market Women Soldiers etc	

INITIATIONS

*At Capital City: Iduote Marble Palace
Lights reveal half-open coffin
in the center of a gaudily-furnished
bedroom*

VOICE FROM COFFIN:

Are you there?.. The people understand me very well. I also understand them. We know what we want (*pause*). At the Great Gathering, I'll mesmerize them: Soweto, Falling Cocoa prices in the World Market, that stone country of Butcher dog Botha... By decree number one million and ninety-ten... ninety-ten (*pause*). I'll get them where I want... (*a spitting noise*). Take these journalists off and torture them... I am the Consciousness, the Tempo and Heart-Throb of Iduote... The He-Alone and Guide. (*short pause*). I am the One-Man-Band... I am the Universal Pedagogue and Pointing-Rod... I'm in all places at the same time... (*to an imaginary group*). Je vous ai compris. I'll tax them for the air I provide... (*short pause*). In this Total Coming, I will be the Alpha and Omega, the last and only pharaoh in Paradise... the history of the historicity of Agidigidi. (*with a stage whisper*). Tax them for the air I provide... and they know that I can be tough... By decree number one million and ninety-ten... yes... one million and ninety-ten (*with a hoarse whisper*). I'll be in politics till I die... I give small bouai power... one small bouai power... *Shege dan banzaar... I go come dey* (*after a long pause*) *Amot, za-a di money. Ma-a ding Sonara money.. Oweh, money mbeng. Wa ding money? Bebele zamba-a!*

Coffin opens and reveals the cadaverous face of His Royal Majesty, Akhikikrikii "the First and Last" for a moment. (pause) La tricherie, la demagogie, la traquerie... all mixed together,... Le vandalisme... cooked together, then you know me! Essamba! Essamba! Essamba!

Coffin closes entombing His Majesty Baal Akhikikrikii Njunghu, The First and Last Miracle for the night:

Violent but choked snoring accompanied by funerary music... (voice as if in transition). Wa-a ding money?... M'a ding Sonara money... Sonara money abui... Je vous ai compris... Za-ah bi ké... Wa ke vé?

TOTAL DARKNESS:

ECLIPSE

FRAGMENT OF A SCENE

The back scene opens and discovers Woman and Student.

WOMAN:

What does a dentist do with a bad tooth? *(pause)*. Note: it will take a hammer and chisel to knock off Agidigidi's bad leadership teeth

STUDENT:

Mother we will be branded the grave diggers of their peaceful revolution.

WOMAN:

What's the matter with you now?... Revolution? *(laughs)* A revolution should not rest on the army and police alone, Child. *(short pause)*. A police and army which behaves against its own people as if it were an army of occupation. *(vehemently)*. They are criminal in substance, illegal in form *(significantly)*. Agidigidi is like the woman who gave birth to a two-headed baby at the Nsimalen aeroport. What could have caused a woman who had hitherto had four normal children to give birth to a two-headed monster with four eyes of rigour and moralisation at Ngomezap?

STUDENT:

(despairingly). Such propaganda... Only a mad man will go against their self-righteousness...

WOMAN:

Their propaganda has no target... It breeds distrust... It is divorced from the interests of the people - from their daily needs.

STUDENT:

(weakly). Mother we are building a new society to confront Botha the Boer who created the economic crisis. Our Leader at Iduote has written on that.

WOMAN:

You do not need an association of makers of law and order. It is a masonic cartel imposed by a minority on a majority to protect their interests... Law and Capital Punishment is their creed *(pause)*. They are the black Broederbund!!

STUDENT:

(apparently confused). Mother! Mother! Ngongo says in building a new social order we must give praise to those who guide us towards our destiny... Those who live at Iduote.

WOMAN:

Yes, but what form of destiny? What form of rulers? *(short pause)*. What kind of "new" society? Do you want me to say tomorrow: you, be ashamed of yourself?

STUDENT:

Those who did not conform were sent to break stones until they died...

WOMAN:

They were drummed to prison... Yes, they were drummed out of existence, but in a country where the rulers have betrayed the ideals of their people to benefit themselves, Prison can only be the throne of honour... These are your martyrs; your own Mandelas. *(pause)*. But, look at it: the nation is upside-down!

STUDENT:

Mother they are winning...

WOMAN:

(fiercely). They are not winning... They only appear to do so because they are able to create conflicts in the societies they oppress... We must grind to dust Njunghu's robbers!

STUDENT:

(looks fearfully about him). I am afraid of that name... They disappeared... They disappeared... my colleagues... without trace... on a dark night. *(weeps)*.

WOMAN:

You can only avenge your comrades' death by struggle against the enemy within; whose stomachs are made of coded accounts the sweat and blood of workers!

STUDENT:

(as if suddenly inspired). Are they those who expect a lifetime of lucrative positions and privilege financed by a beggared people...?

WOMAN:

Yes... This is a national bourgeoisie which has assumed the mantle of the colonisers. The people have drunk their cup of bitterness to the dregs!

Woman watches Student in respectful silence.

STUDENT:

Then the enemies of the people are those who institute mass famine to create new overdrafts for the already rich... Those who gain remain the church people and those who pad estimates. *(pause)*. Contractors who use sub-standard material; those whose bellies now hang over their belts; a vile class of men determined to oppress and wreck the land. *(short pause)*. They are the forwarding agents and other rich and powerful people...

the fat badgers who insist on "the rule of law". Tyrannical billionaires whose royal thrones could not be supported without corruption!

WOMAN:

(in total admiration). Son!

STUDENT:

Those who gain are those who rule over a divided and demoralized people... Is this dawn! *(takes a deep breath and looks at the sky)*. Mother! the whole country lies waste, yet they flatter themselves that we are moving towards a new dawn.

WOMAN:

It is a false dawn, in a *realm* where its youth grow prematurely grey as alcohol makes final idiots of those who have not yet been crazed by the local clergyman's stifling dogma on subservience... The people are without food or hope. You must choose the side of the long suffering people of Agidigidi

STUDENT:

We must break the chains that hold us in bondage!

WOMAN:

Do you really mean you'll do this for your people?

STUDENT:

They sowed the wind, they should reap the whirlwind... Every action of theirs has meant the selling of the land.

(Woman tongue-tied. is wrapped up in contemplative silence).

STUDENT:

They have been eaten to the core by the syphilis of the new political cargoes... They have proved themselves so fat as the semen-drops of their colonial masters... Or, do

you think, Mother, do you think that they should be given another chance?

WOMAN:

(fiercely). Don't do anything unreasonable! That's no reason for them to break.

STUDENT:

But they have children.

WOMAN:

There are children whose fathers are seized daily from them and put against the economic wall. The people are under continual disquietudes, never enjoying a minute's peace of mind. The nation is on its knees!

STUDENT:

(despairs) They are flamboyant even in their disregard for human rights. The economy in ruins, our people without food or hope.

WOMAN:

We must emphasize that major defeats should not discourage us. We must constantly look into our inner resources, fortified by persuasion and by appeals to the masses against the *beni-oui-ouis* in Church and state; the errand boys of trans-nationals who see unified people's action as more threatening than hand grenades. Struggle must be our life!

STUDENT:

What if we break the chains of the robbers?

WOMAN:

We will destroy their satanic institutions!

STUDENT:

What if we overcome the makers of law and order?

WOMAN:

The people shall govern!

STUDENT:

The people shall govern indeed!

WOMAN:

(to audience). We will then take our people to meet the sweet dawn of Victory! Hurrah!

*Music of the harvest
as curtain falls, slowly.*

FRAGMENT OF A SCENE

A black reverend gentleman enters in cassock and surplice. There is a chancel of communion wine in his right hand. The spotlight should pick him out while the rest of the stage remains dark. As he raises his hands in mock-prayer, sound of singing is heard. Singing fades. Pastor is in fact practising before an imaginary congregation.

ATANGANA:

The devil toad of Sonara finds work amongst a disloyal and rebellious people... And I say: We must take advantage of the opportunity He has given us... He has spoken of everyone's need for a new birth, a new beginning... A brand new life is possible in Him. (pause). Hallelujah! (bursts into self-admiring laughter). That gospel train is running across that bridge... And can the prodigal daughter make it to Zion if she runs? - I say: YES! (affects the wearied tone of the messiah). Are your sins forgiven? Are you prepared to die? Have you been washed white with the martyrs' virgin kists? Are you prepared to meet him... My name is Evangelist Absalom Abednego Amougou Atangana! Set thine house in order (self-admiring laughter). I never realized that to have knowledge of others secrets would give me so much suffering... Look unto Zion. Not one of the stakes thereof shall be removed. Neither shall any of the tabernacles thereof be broken... The kingdom of God is at hand, and these are signs of the end! Take

your Bible, read it from Genesis to Revelation... Za-a,
bi ké!

Woman enters. Sighs deeply. Pastor raises his head. The atmosphere is one of concealed animosity!

ATANGANA:

I must have seen you somewhere (*with a beatific smile*). May God bless you and keep you (*pause*). Whatever is the case you have accepted Christ, you cannot be afraid of death. Blessed be the Lord...

WOMAN:

(*sagely*). Blessed be the Lord for he has shown us his marvellous kindness in a sick country. All the waters of the ocean can never clean the filth in this country!

ABSALOM:

Take your Bible, read it from Genesis to Revelation, you'll know what I'm talking about, nation will fight against nation, state against state...

WOMAN:

Foreign bank accounts against the Gross National Product!

ABSALOM:

State against state as it is in *Le Vraie Eglise de Politique d'Agidigidi*.

WOMAN:

This war we shall fight it till we die!

ATANGANA:

A rebellious life is wind. It shall see no more good. Only the images of stone receive its prayers (*pause*). It is the Paraclete who is holding the knife not you. If you fight him you can't win.

WOMAN:

If we depend on your laws there will not be anyone of us alive to confront your god.

ATANGANA:

Signs will no longer be taken for wonders. In his name I offer A Good Evening!

WOMAN:

(contemptuously). Stuff your hypocritical Good evenings... So long as you church Monarchs anoint and bless the elephantine plunder in Agidigidi; I'll have none of your white-washed theology.

Pastor glances at Woman murderously.

ATANGANA:

(grimly). This is the eve of the Lamb's coming... *My name is Evangelist Absalom Abednego Amougou Atangana!*

WOMAN:

At the eve of that Coming many false prophets shall arise each confessing to speak in his name...

Pastor glances at her murderously.

ATANGANA:

I see *(moody quiet, withdrawn)*. What is your problem then?

WOMAN:

The real problem is between the two irreconcilable camps: the allies and customers of Imperialism: those who sign unequal treaties and agreements whereby their colonial puppet-masters enjoy special privileges *(pause)*. See? the proprietors of corporate stores of political intrigue and ambition; who, to nourish their gargantuan greed barter the patriotic minded progressive forces prepared to stand up against them...

ATANGANA:

I hope that you know what you are saying (*his back to the wall*). That is subversive talk!

WOMAN:

Our creed...

ATANGANA:

(*sneeringly*). What creed?

WOMAN:

Our creed is our bridge to eternity! By your reckless policies you may delay the collapse of Agidigidi.

ATANGANA:

(*with heat*). What are you insinuating? Devil!

WOMAN:

The collapse of Agidigidi

ATANGANA:

Whore! I will not listen to you again!

WOMAN:

The total collapse of Agidigidi! Hallelujah!

ATANGANA:

Jezebel! Female Wilderness!

WOMAN:

Agidigidi will collapse!

ATANGANA:

Beware of blasphemy! Sister-in-Penance, Freedom unchained burns like the inferno!

WOMAN:

It's the kind of freedom you and your masters offer; Freedom of the cage!

ATANGANA:

(with spirit). The Guide and Paraclete His Most Holy Excellency Njunghu Akhikrikrii wa Njunghu is the Caesar of today! Holy Theology, Revised Standard Version; The Anointed Bible plucked from St. Peter's Tomb; it says. I quote "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's" We therefore give to Mighty Comrade Njunghu wa Njunghu what is mighty comrade Caesar Akhikrikrii Njunghu Ngbendu Paraclete wa Njunghu First and Last *(pause)*. The First and Holiest Last. I speak in the tongue of fire which is the testimony of the Holy Spirit *(significantly)*. The Guide is the Nation, the Nation is the Guide - Dispute me! *(pause)*. I think what you need is to read his great book: "We have to hold tight to what we have achieved. We have to sustain our powers, and, consolidate and forge ahead in this decade." Remember? *(pause)*. "You have once again asserted the solemn conviction that our great national party - A.P.D.M. remains the crucible and the best school for Democracy and National Integration in Agidigidi"

WOMAN:

(sneeringly). It is Akhikrikrii's hand-picked robbers who bless the hooliganism being enthroned at the highest meccas of Agidigidi. It is you who urge the crucifixion of small-fry burglars... And, as you set your dogs on their corpses it is you who turn round and openly dine and wine with those who decree famine for the peasants. Looters of the national coffers. A plague on the heads of looters of the national coffers.

ATANGANA:

Easy, Woman. Easy.

WOMAN:

(hysterically). Don't woman me! It is you who bless the excellencies of justice where there is no justice.

ATANGANA:

Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!

WOMAN:

He is on our side! Hallelujah! Amen!

ATANGANA:

(startled). Don't tell me you saw *my* Lord

They stare at each other.

WOMAN:

(emphatically). Praise the Lord who is not on the side of the agents of foreign caterpillars of the commonwealth! He cannot be on the side of willing appendages of Capitalism.

ATANGANA:

(indignantly). You're a liar... lies! You are the whore of lies; Thou sower of scandals. You should be wrapped in a cloak of lead and metted slowly over Sodom! *(pause)*. Madam, I wish we would understand ourselves in this place.

WOMAN:

(taking her time, regards him). Have you become pregnant Sangho Pastor?... Atangana, what happened to the body God gave to you?

ATANGANA:

You were of the Women branch of the A.P.D.M. In fact the leader of that group. *(smiling)*. *La democratie aux couleurs d'Agidigidi*. In Njongmezhap.

WOMAN:

You understand only slavery and eternal ruin!

ATANGANA:

(with Old Testament indignation). O thee of little faith! Hell is a nasty lake of fire; it is my duty to warn you; that is the christian's passover of Njindoum and Lac Nyos like the terrorist acts committed at Nagasaki and

Hiroshima! *(pause)*. Let us look briefly at Revelations 5 which talks of this wrathful, apocalyptic coming...

WOMAN:

None of it! I know something about life. I know nothing about death *(pause)*. Your church is the staunchest ally of those who treat our workers the way they treat their ox-ploughs!

ATANGANA:

I find this really extraordinarily interesting... The church stands, always, as the protector of property and the weak, the succourer of the meek, the ally of the just and the poor. The physician of today's Lazarus.

WOMAN:

(laughter). Hurrah! The Salvation of Dives has come! *(pause)*. We are moving to that incredible moment in the history of a people!

ATANGANA:

Pastor who is your immediate Shepherd is not going to let the Devil destroy you!

WOMAN:

The poor people of today are no longer as patient as those of old, Amougou Atangana; They will no longer sit by and watch the *macaruna's vicars and their French allies prosper while their children go naked and hungry; They'll not sit meekly and pray for those who have sold out to neo-colonial bribery!*

ATANGANA:

You are not on trial fallen-one-before-the-Lord

WOMAN:

They will no longer listen to the national old testament Prophets who predict cosmic annihilation if they don't love their own exploiters to the point of folly *(emphatically)*. They are asking for their own Paradise, here, and NOW!

ATANGANA:

I guess so.

WOMAN:

You may guess so. They *know* so.

ATANGANA:

Woman, what you propose can only bring apocalypse to you; and regrets to me (*pause*). I don't know why you are willing to stick your hand in the fire of Armageddon for these people.

WOMAN:

(*presses on mercilessly*). Far from it! We have no fear; for it is we who are in the majority against you. Natural law and justice demands that those who have contributed to the depression of the national economy, the starvation and mass death of its citizens, should pay for this! Down with the fat thieves of the church! Down with the robbers in Paradise! All Power to the People!

Monsignor Abednego Amougou Absalom Atangana stares at her with hostility and wonder.

ATANGANA:

Aren't you afraid of God?

WOMAN:

Why should we fear him? We have done nothing to him. Down with the robbers of the people! Power to the People!

ATANGANA:

You show signs of being incorrigible... He has said: He who does not take his Cross and follow him is not worthy of him... I must see that I'm a sinner and condemned!

WOMAN:

The Saviour's will is our will. It is not the Saviour moulded in the image of local exploiters and foreign parasites!

ATANGANA:

I rebuke you in the name of the prophets and archangels (*pompously*). Go behind me, Satan! Or, in the name of Jesus, I'll scatter you!

WOMAN:

Power to the people! (*triumphant laughter*). The struggle intensifies!

ATANGANA:

(*resignedly*). I may only warn you not to goad them into doing away with you.

WOMAN:

Each time one of us is kidnapped; we are redeemed! Hurrah! The future is ours!

Pastor Amougou Atangana looks like a horrifying wax-work as Woman turns at the door and faces him.

WOMAN:

Good-night Amougou Atangana

He does not answer. His glass of communion-wine, in his hand, held in mid-air. Woman smiles; there is something fearful in her smile.

BLACKOUT

FLASHBACK:

Set in the slum area outside the Capital, in the present time... Lights should show a garden near a stream on a farm... There's also a farmhouse: House is dimly lit. Stage is of course lit to show appropriate time of day: morning. Sound of singing is heard... singing fades... Woman is seen preparing sketches for her political work... she looks out of the window and sighs deeply... Action should reflect this as she recalls various scenes of her political/spiritual

confrontations' etc... This of course can be achieved through blackouts, dance, movement, slides or silhouettes should be used in addition to the voices of Etai-Major Andze Abessollo and Rev. Pastor Abednego Absalom Amougou Atangana.

VOICE OF ABESSOLLO:

You know well enough that you're dealing with sleepwalkers... and, we have given you freedom to do and say what you like.

WOMAN:

It is freedom of the cage.

VOICE OF ATANGANA:

Freedom scourges like the fires of Sodom. May he bless you!

WOMAN:

Who is that?

VOICE OF ATANGANA:

It is the voice of the Anointed of Christ... Hallelujah!

VOICE OF ABESSOLLO:

Through him you meet your Lord! Through him you find your slice of Paradise in Agidigidi

WOMAN:

The Anointed-who?

VOICE OF ATANGANA:

Beware of blasphemy, child. Do not ask for a sign: An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign. "The Murderers and Whore Mongers shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone!"

Woman sighs. Then, with undisguised sarcasm in her voice.

WOMAN:

Who are you then?

VOICE OF ATANGANA:

My gospel is the bridge... I am Evangelist Abednego Amougou Atangana; the bridge to the Lamb... the Holy Lamb. Behold I stand at the door and knock...

WOMAN:

Like our work and songs; a bridge to eternity? Because one is either free or a slave-

PAUSE

WOMAN:

Brother Abednego Amougou, our work and songs are our bridge to eternity... We are the songs we sing. The struggle is our life.

VOICE OF ATANGANA:

Amen! (*pause*). Then in the name of the Lord why do you hate my God... Turn from your sins today. He will make you a child of God!

WOMAN:

We hate *your* God because he makes you hate yourselves.

VOICE OF ABESSOLLO:

You are dragging us into a position where we will have to kill you and your terrorists to protect valuable property...

WOMAN:

It is you who are terrorists. You rule with terror made legal; Stupid puppets armed by Euro-American arms.

VOICE OF ABESSOLLO:

You may speechify and plot against us; I know that you'll lead them only to more suffering because of your

sinister ambition... And quote me if you so desire; We'll give you surgery without anaesthesia. And I'll hold the knife.

WOMAN:

Our suffering is our bridge to one another...

VOICE OF ABESSOLLO:

We'll see that you don't venture near that bridge...

WOMAN:

That bridge is our cross. And everyone of us - like him - must cross that bridge, or die while he still lives...

VOICE OF ABESSOLLO:

If you're thinking of that dissident mad crackpot in detention then; we'll see.

WOMAN:

You may throw us into un-nameable catacombs like you've done to him but Victory and the future are ours!

VOICE OF ABESSOLLO:

Woman, beware of the Devil. Don't be marked by him. The truth can set you free!

WOMAN:

The truth of the people can set Abednego Absalom Amougou and his Philistines - in - Government, free! The people's truth can cut loose the chains that enslave the stealing syndicates and bring down the castles that hold together the babels of thieves' Paradise!

VOICE OF ABESSOLLO:

So you are Woman Samson?

WOMAN:

I am of Umkhonto we Sizwe. I am of Operation Dead Country!

(Terrifying silence).

VOICE OF ABESSOLLO:

Umkhonto we Sizwe, you're the advance patrol of a subversive army, then? *(no response)*. Keep on playing the Marxist - Leninist bull of the Soviet Herd; you'll be getting an ugly surprise from us... Our mortuary people will only just be too willing to see, what makes a secessionist-subversive tick!

WOMAN:

What stops you from kidnapping all the people?

VOICE OF ABESSOLLO:

We who?

WOMAN:

You and your white verkramptes: The expert thieves, the religious mongers and liars... Those who make hegemonistic adventurism an article of faith.

VOICE OF ABESSOLLO:

Those brethren are here to protect your soul from the Nagasaki of Nyos; the trumpet of Njindoum from the wrath of Lac Nyos! They are here to lead penitent christians into their indaba.

WOMAN:

(laughter). They are here to protect their stolen property.

VOICE OF ATANGANA:

Be careful woman... Don't let the Devil mark you... Trust and obey.

VOICE OF ABESSOLLO:

You're planning a coup?

WOMAN:

Ours will be a popular uprising not a coup.

VOICE OF ABESSOLLO:

Against who?

WOMAN:

Against outlaws who rule through naked force and fraud
(*pause-vehemently*). Your regime has no legitimacy!

VOICE OF ABESSOLLO:

If you ask me: simply an exercise in vanity. That's what subversion is.

VOICE OF ATANGANA:

You can see that she cannot be a good christian

WOMAN:

Our so-called christian lives have always meant nothing to you!

VOICE OF ABESSOLLO:

Then appeal to the law!

WOMAN:

Drawn up by comrades-in-crime? (*mocking laughter*).
Who change their laws when those laws make them uncomfortable?

VOICE OF ABESSOLLO:

You are a dangerous and violent element.

WOMAN:

Abessollo!

VOICE OF ABESSOLLO:

(*startled response*). Eh?

WOMAN:

Tell me Andze Abessollo who is more dangerous...

VOICE OF ABESSOLLO:

(stock response). Enemies of Government. Those who plot my leaders' downfall.

WOMAN:

We are in a dangerous... and violent country *(with finality)*. Power has rutted you; and you are only one jump ahead of your foreign Sanatoriums.

VOICE OF ATANGANA:

(resignedly). You can see that she has been marked by the devil...she cannot die well

VOICE OF ABESSOLLO:

Insurrection is not the romantic tournament chaps like that dissident Mandela are saying it is.

VOICE OF ATANGANA:

(as if to no one in particular):

Does she smoke bhang a lot this woman? I mean... cannabis sativa...

WOMAN:

(with a cryptic smile). Our children won't be hungry anymore. We won't see our old folks all twisted up with the rheumatism of injustice; the water of exploitation running down their faces *(emphatically)*. We are here to destroy the robbers in paradise! *(pause)*. They have created their own Robben Islands. Their Separate Amenities Acts. *(fist raised in the A.N.C. salute.)* But soon all that will be over!

Swift change over, Woman who stares before her as if from a dream - projected back into immediate-present from the reverie... And, as she plunges herself into her revolutionary work with more zeal, song as... lights slowly dim.

ACT DROP

FRAGMENT OF A SCENE

MARBLE PALACE

Morning:

At 6l he is craggy, ruthless and immensely cunning. To his left and right the Miracle of Agidigidi is flanked by secretaries taking down every word of his in shorthand.

At the other end sit his cowed assistants H.R.H... Akhikrikikii sits back and surveys them through half-closed eyes; the smoke from his inevitable pipe drifting past his granite features.

Seated in upright armchairs across the mahogany desk from the Miracle are the two experts who had asked to see him; Lights reveal Ambassador and Swiss Banker.

AMBASSADOR:

(with false humility in his voice). It has been a privilege meeting such a distinguished genius of politics.

Akhikrikikii First and Last takes refuge in silence...

AMBASSADOR:

(meant as an aside). Uh? Them say ya don't shoot your mouth anymore?

ATANGANA:

(doctrinally). The Word, behold the inspired Word: God's purpose inspired in you divine master *(demonstrating)*. is to make the entire landscape of Agidigidi a beautiful park for your children to frolic in, and enjoy. Hallelujah! *(as if to no one)*. According to the prophetess, God has asked me to tell the world that your leadership is special. You'll transfer the United Nations Headquarters to our most blessed paradise!

The Guide, his violent emotions apparently crested, changes his inspirational posture and meditates away.

SWISS BANKER:

(aside). An impenetrable negro beast! Who will hammer his iron jaws open?... A drugged fool!

ATANGANA:

(in attitude of prayer). Why did God uphold the death penalty, and yet how was his mercy shown. O Botha! Dog! Shylock Jew of economic racism!

(an impenetrable silence).

AMBASSADOR:

(an amazed aside). Gotta pry them furnecys open... love ya with a lead-pipe.

AKIIKIKRIKII:

Where is the anini chap responsible for Minorities? *(growling as Minority Nnyanyen advances timorously to the end of the table; his sweat-damp report in his hands: The Guide seizes it. After looking briefly at it favours Minority with a cold, vicious stare)*. Imbecile of the most inferior calibre. Traitor of traitors. Jackal who licks his own mother's dunghill anus! Less then an atom of Bothadog!

MINORITY:

Yes, your Anointed Majesty. *(said in a fawning manner)*.

A bell rings but no one appears. The silence in the room is murderous.

AKIIKIKRIKI:

(addressing his victim). You are of exceptionally low intelligence... I know the inside of your skull... You're an idiot!

Minority Nnyanyen frightened witless wipes his brow and studies his hands. Another bout of murderous silence.

AMBASSADOR:

(muttering appreciatively). Tell it to them nigger punks, uh buster... Them high yaller chillun some kick, uh!

NGONGO:

(reading from his official notes). The scourge of rumour-mongers and deviationists. He will hang Louis le Grange the Minister of Justice where there is no justice. My Deity!

The Font rises, meditates for a while. He turns towards his first victim who looks more sick than ever.

AKIIIIKIKR!KII:

(to another victim). Your electoral district?... Developments?... Lined out... already waiting to honour my speech against Botha? Any evil-doers? *(barely above a whisper)*. I'm MESSIAH! I AM AM... Essamba! Essamba! Essamba!

MADAM PATRIOT:

Kidnapping - *(smiling meaningfully at Guide)*. Le droit de talion.

MINORITY NNYANYEN:

Kidnapping their socialist evil-doers poses no problem. Ideas here flow from the newspapers which The Major has successfully padlocked, your Highness. We can now drive the nail through Botha's smelling skull.

SWISS BANKER:

(with awe). A national conference has no place in emerging nations. Tried leaders always avoid that leprosy.

AKIIIIKIKRIKII:

(Pointing to his rotund associates). I encourage refined appetites. I anoint private initiative... One word; Surveillance!

AMBASSADOR:

A national conference is an enemy to be killed on sight!

MADAM PATRIOT:

Envelopes are juicer... You cannot expect a dog to come to you if you have a big stick in your hand. I can assure Mr. Ambassador that they are the kind of communists we like.

AMBASSADOR:

(in classroom fashion). Our solidarity, with your government, involves our ability to refrain from pushing the enemies of Botha to a point where they would want to take hold of powers that they are not yet mature enough to wield. *(short pause, bows stiffly)*. Your Excellency, this must be the Sonara oil of Solidarity between civilization and Agidigidi against the Evil Empire of Djugashvili Stalin the Opposition Leader who hates God François Mitterand and the French.

ATANGANA:

The Empire of the Arch-angels of Jericho blazing against the Lilliputs of Belzebuul... In the name of the Miracle! The First and Last! Handsome King! Our Handsome King!

Ambassador and Banker look slyly at each other. The Miracle's face is a marvel of divine resignation.

AKIIKIKRIKII:

(to Minority). I didn't believe you could be such a brainless moron. *(glancing once more at the report before him)*. Always interfering with oil... A stupid clown!... Carrier of cryptococcal meningitis.

AMBASSADOR:

Your Excellency, compassion.

AKIIKIKRIKII:

(bangs his fist on the table). Merde! Are you rooting for

this thug, Ambassador?
(*Ambassador inclines his massive gorilla head*).

AKHIKRIKRII:

Voilà! (*short pause*). They just jockey for advantage among each other, for power, and to hell with their assimilated minority. (*eyes glaring with hatred*). Cancerous growths in the nation's morale.

ATANGANA:

They suppose H.E should be one of them, the Lord will not accept. Not anymore (*pause*). After his speech in the United Nations who can undo him?

SWISS BANKER:

They are mercenaries.

AMBASSADOR:

Your Excellency the situation between us is completely satisfying to me at the moment.

AKHIKRIKRII:

(*pointedly ignoring him, to Banker*) Mais, c'est formidable! One is dealing with mercenaries who do not appreciate such covenants as Leadership against my Arch-Foe Botha the Hycna of Imbecility.

SWISS BANKER:

(*with finality*). Compassion is an attribute of the weak. The Opposition cannot hold out for long. It will be over in a week. We know the Opposition. They lack the guts!

Ambassador makes a rude noise, staring stubbornly before him - Then glances murderously at Banker.

SWISS BANKER:

There's no way out for the West without surrendering democracy before our allies in the developing world.

AMBASSADOR:

(an angry aside). What fella are you going to rip-off, buster? You're not going to break it off with all that jazz d'ya hear?... Why do I wanna rap anymore? I'm not gonna leave my turf and be jumped by another gang. And get me buster: It's your gang against mine.

SWISS BANKER:

(reproachfully to Ambassador). Only a messiah can save this part of the Kingdom from the epilepsy of Marxist-Leninism and Stalinist catastrophes which work through oppositionist epilepsies!

ATANGANA:

He is the bulwark against the red sickle and hammer of the Kremlin. *(dreamily)*. Against the devilish troika of Mao-Tse-Tong, Tcheun Ngen-lai and Le-Duc Tho who want nothing short of Hiroshima.

*Flattered to no end, Njunghu Akhikrikikii Njunghu withdraws into a membrane of vindicated silence.
Tension waiting to be broken.*

ATANGANA:

(chanting). The Messiah! World Messiah! The only one in the World! No duplicate! First and Last! The World Messiah! Handsome King!

AKIIKIKRIKII:

I have all of them in the niches of my palm. The nation is not pregnant after all. *(pause)*. It is suffering from kwashiorkor. Let the opposition campaign without money!

NGONGO:

He is the messianic conqueror of Democracy: the trumpet of Jefferson and Lincoln Le Pens - Chirac who'll rout to dust the corrupting dog-mouthed Ho Chi Minh's in our midst. Tireless Defeater of the Enemies of the Nation... His Majesty the King of Agidigidi.

Nugget of Mankind!

(as Ngongo goes on and on, Akhikrikrikii collapses into a prepared coma... The unsuspected get up in fear. TENSION.)

MINORITY NNYANYEN:

(addressing mr. Ambassador conspiratorially). For 20 years he has suffered from the same condition. In fact he has collapsed into a comma twice in recent months because of drug dosage problems... The variety of anti-coagulant drugs he takes to combat the risk of the stroke produce side effects on his personality.

MADAM PATRIOT:

(Addressing banker conspiratorially). We are cringing yes-men because he is regarded as an astute political survivor; but recently he has lost his grip on reality and his sanity. And he is a drug-pusher; another Moussa Traore or if you like another civilian Norièga!

(Ambassador and Banker exchange glances).

SWISS BANKER:

He is certainly ill.

AMBASSADOR:

The beast is insane!

MINORITY NNYANYEN:

(With the humility of a regent to the neo-colonial throne). Your excellencies that, he certainly is. Heart problems and thickening arteries leading to constriction of the brain's blood supply. The lord should summon him soon... You can hear Belzebuul sounding his trumpet, Pastor?

ATANGANA :

Hallelujah!

MADAM PATRIOT:

(confiding to her "friend"). The surgery was meant to transfer a portion of blood vessel from AKHIKI's leg to his neck, Pastor?

ATANGANA:

Hallelujah, say I!

(Both foreigners listen in respectful but conspiratorial silence).

MINORITY NNYANYEN :

Your great historians themselves say that when that hound, Stalin, became too impossible for his assistants...

AMBASSADOR:

(Helpfully). They finished Jackal off during one of his commas putting an end to his sharp mood changes.

SWISS BANKER:

We could get Akhi Njunghu *(pronounces it as Njunku)*. a real doctor?

(Bell rings. Silence. Akhikrikrikii stuns some.)

AKHIKRIKRIKII:

Who are doctors? *(pause)*. Je vous ai compris!

ATANGANA: *(exulting)*. He rises! Read his covenant: Le vraie Eglise de politique d'Agidigidi.

SWISS BANKER:

(startled). A miracle!

As a toadie wipes the miracle's granite brow; H.E Njunghu goes over them with his eyes.

AKHIKRIKRIKII:

(Pithily). Don't worry I have always pulled through without an "expert" *(enigmatically)*. The only cure those"

expert" expatriates know is how to put one into his tomb Bebele Samba!... je vous ai compris. Essamba! Essamba! Essamba!

NGONGO:

(his eyes rolling ceaselessly in their sockets). The phoenix has risen from his own ashes!

ATANGANA:

Mankind's Utopia! Miracle! This is the resurrection! Redemption has COME! At long last! Blow the trumpets of Jericho! Welcome O Zion! Hero of the struggle! Killer of the Gorilla mouth Botha! Botha you will die; Bebele Samba!

AKIIKIKRIKII:

(Takes his inspired pose). When a small safety factor is ignored even the greatest structures will collapse

ALL:

So true! So true!

AKIIKIKRIKII:

When our first parents broke God's law, a flood of subversive madness, iniquitous rebellion and suffering began...*(aside)* Ma-a ding Sonara money! *(pause, aloud).* Rebellion must die!

ATANGANA:

Amen! Amen!

ALL:

Amen! Amen!

(Silence reigns for a moment, incessant ringing of the bell but no one appears. Silence.)

AKIIKIKRIKII:

I would rather let an obedient bushman into an ultra-complex hospital surgery room to carry out operations

instead of utilising a Nobelite who does not sing my songs and calls me: Font, the pedagogue, one-man-band... Essamba! Essamba! Essamba!

ATANGANA:

Hallelujah! Agidigidi and beyond!

STOOGES:

(from off). As far as we are concerned, he must rule us until death.

ALL:

Hallelujah ! Hallelujah !

ANOTHER STOOGES:

(from off). They'll be forced face-down in the dust. They'll be mercilessly flogged!

AMBASSADOR:

(Bowing, he addresses the font). We admire your country for carrying out assiduous efforts to remedy its economic problems. Yours are the most sweeping reforms that have ever been tried in Africa, Greatest of Excellencies! Yours is paradise Regained.

AKHIKRIKRI:

(Please to no end. Seizes Agidigidi's map from an unctuous aide. Beckons to his foreign friends: Shows them areas to farm in reward for their solidarity.) A minor gift for the speech making event against the dog Botha *(loud cheering)*. In Europe and the U.S; people understand elections but here in our equatorial jungle it is a very difficult concept to explain. In Agidigidi, we must make unity ... We have the right to that difference.... Essamba! Essamba! Essamba!

(The Font rises, and follows his medicine-man to his shrine).

BLACK OUT

FIRST MOVEMENT: *ROBBERS IN PARADISE*

A little crowd gathers to the left of the quadrangle. At the centre is a slim man, in Khaki the supposedly 'mad poet and jailbird, talking and raising both hands in a show of threatening defiance...Exit poet.

AKONCHONG:

(addressing audience). He committed no offence. He was never brought to the law-courts and tried... The regime in power creates conditions that make people what they are.

GAMBARI:

(to audience). And the detention conditions in the camps are so horrible; it is a nightmare. The aim of course is to destroy you physically and morally. The food is three cups of millet flour and salt a day. The camp is situated in plain savannah a zone completely surrounded by wild animals.

(re-enter poet as Mandela, gesticulating).

POET AS MANDELA:

Where is the cave to Documentation *(pause)*. Such a harmless sounding name... You'll do well to show the passer-by the official underground route to documentation... where he dug lime and broke stones at a quarry.

VOICE OF ABESSOLLO:

(Speaking into hand-mike from off). Set him on fire! The Government does not recognize him as a writer! He says!.... Where are the poems he has written in honour of the leaders! He is a counterfeit messiah... ah my head *(pause)*. As Etat-Major enforcement of all the laws of the land devolves upon my office. These sacred responsibilities cannot be compromised.

(More workers gather).

1st WORKER:

He is the intellectual who couldn't pawn his soul like the rest *(in pidgin English)*. Wetin my eyes dey see, my mouth no fit talk-am o! And that na by Presidential decree.

VOIC OF WOMAN:

(from off). He is not tied to property. His soul has not been murdered by calculated greed...

2nd WORKER:

All that noise for moralize na jegele. De mugu dey just dey gang up for thief ONCPB and Sonara money. You understand so, this thing na clique!

A CHORUS OF VOICES

(from off): A leader is not god! A leader listens to the voices of his people.

GAMBARI:

(in hausa). Kada ramin kura sai ya yanta, zama ruwa sai dan kada.

AKKACHONG:

(translates to audience). Mallam says: Only the son of a hyena can enter its cave, only the son of a crocodile can live in hot water.

AKKACHONG:

A sad country...

GAMBARI:

And a passive people... *(in hausa)*. Ramin kura sai ya yanta, zama ruwa sai dan kada!

VOICE OF ABESSOLLO:

(from off)? We must take our bearings from the consciousness of Agidigidi who is the greatest revolutionary genius in human history...The

consciousness of Agidigidi is an ideological genius; an extraordinary man! *Le vraie Eglise de politique d'Agidigidi.*

POET AS MANDELA:

(thoughtfully). Their pain was the sound of silvers of glass being methodically crushed in the dragon vice of a fiend.

VOICE OF A WOMAN:

(from off). Mandela is the fighting spirit of the people!

POET AS MANDELA:

Even though I writhed in agony over my own venomous destruction, as some of them lurched out through the doors into dungeon horrors, their pain tore through the faded khaki of my sanity.

VOICE OF ABESSOLLO:

(from off). We'll wage war on war! we'll govern by our own habits; And let me warn you, our word is holy writ when it comes to the interpretation of order and the rule of the law! We will grind you to dust with hob-nailed boots!

VOICE OF WOMAN:

(chanting from off). The fighting spirit of the people cannot be broken!

GAMBARI:

(in hausa). Umaru in bacin ka riko zamani, Akhikrikirii.

AKONCHONG:

(translates). It is the drum of war that we will beat for Akhikrikirii.

THE POET AS MANDELA:

(addressing audience). Thus as they were frog-marched into wild swamps, and as the massive rocks of fire-

power sucked the oxygen out of their brains; this elegy for my people (*singing*).

Enter a woman who leads a group of other women to centre stage: they break into song. Woman anoints poet's feet and as she places garland on his neck, crowd breaks into cheering...

WOMAN:

He would not become an important robber. So who can break the will of the people?

GAMBARI:

Umaru in bacin ka riko zamani, Akhikrikirii.

OTHERS:

Even the jackal might not break the will of the people!

A WORKER:

(*sighs*). Agidigidi people are one kine funny people... everyday na tief for dat town!

VOICE OF ABESSOLLO:

Escadron, Subversive Element, Eunuch, Partyist, kinsman or foe (*in Ewondo*). Macarana-a! wa-a ding Sonara money?

WOMAN:

Who can break the collective will of the people?
Hurrah!

OTHERS:

Hurrah! The jackal cannot break the collective will of the people!

1st WORKER:

We should deify our Mandela. Hurrah!

WOMAN:

Let us not repeat such costly mistakes, we will not deify anyone. He is part of the people. A leader must carry the entire nation with him

WORKER:

But what did he say?

GAMBARI:

(explaining). The major shareholders of the oil corporations, lawyers and masonic judges, the rich and the powerful molochs of the "Party" these are the insatiable kleptocrats who have created for us a nightmare beyond even our worst dreams...

AKONCHONG:

The true Mandela must see beyond the frequent hypocrisies of the makers of the rule of law. This regime has done so much damage to the rule of law even worse than any fascist regime!

GAMBARI:

Umaru in bacin ka riko zamani, Akhikrikirii.

WOMAN:

It is what he says!

CROWD:

Get rid of the robbers! Power to the people! The people must Govern! Amandla Awether! Amandla Awether!

Exit woman crowd etc.

Quick shift in scene: Documentation Centre. Action of the academics largely in parody and mime.

GAMBARI:

(addressing audience). Agidigidi is a more lucrative place for foreigners than citizens. Ramin kura sai ya yanta, zama ruwa sai dan kada!

AKONCHONG:

(addressing audience). They use brute force to stay in power while the rest of the population dies in misery of grinding poverty... *(pause).* It is easier to walk on water than to express one's mind in Agidigidi.

Enter Etat major Abessollo who appears surrounded by his guards.

ABESSOLLO:

(addressing the unemployed). You have been stewing your heads together... and unity... *(cryptically).* There is justice and there is justice... *(He walks up and down as he questions them).* Confessed?... Belong to subversive groups? *(an aside).* I wouldn't know what to do without guns... Auto-Defense?

AKONCHONG:

There is subversion and there is subversion.

ABESSOLLO:

Keep your opinion to yourself. See no evil... *(draws his sword as if to strike him.)* This will only lead you to vanity of lethal perforations... Bar Beach show! One word: Surveillance!

AKONCHONG:

Agidigidi has the most democratic constitution in the world!

STUDENT:

And heaven!

ABESSOLLO:

Slander! *(looking up and down the corridor and shouting).* Where is the logic in your thinking? *(arm poised for a blow).* To protect the innocents from the spread of rumours check your information from the competent authorities and what have you. Truth comes from the top.

GAMBARI/AKONCHONG:

We are good Agidigidians, we don't argue... And the nation is up-side down...

ABESSOLLO:

(he goes over them with his eyes). Ingrates! I say INGRATES!! Wicked and subversive! Where are your flags of subversion? Lazy I say... Lazy! you cannot be Scientists and mathematicians... *(derisively)*. Doctors of Art... If you don't know the history of the font of Agidigidi then you don't know history of Agidigidi and what have you... He is Hero of Heroes... World democrat. Look at it, Mitterand's dream: A model pupil.

AKONCHONG:

We are ignorant men... And he has no faith in human beings.

ABESSOLLO:

(Sneeringly). And my friends what below-the-belt knock-out politics can you play against the most cunning species of the Darwinian ape... *(short pause)*. The francophonie monkey is the monkeyiest of them all *(aside)*. Victims of impotent rage... Have you heard Chirac and le Pens recently? *(to audience)*. Who's there?

AKONCHONG:

The font of Agidigidi must not tolerate dissent...

ABESSOLLO:

(now becoming very affable). Get them where we want them... Eh? You put yourselves on the tarmac to power *(purring the words)*. It is a road without end... You are happy and my work easier, *(dismisses his guards)* *(strikes his thinking pose)*. Why anglofous... Betray themselves?...*(fixes them with a long look)*. Their betrayals are a manifestation of self-hatred and impotent rage!

GAMBARI:

There is corruption and there is corruption.. Na godé!
But do you have the evidence? Can you proof that my
D.G's are Ali Baba's envy?

ABESSOLLO:

(in a fury). We are not going to allow you prowl our
streets... We are not gunning for anyone yet. But just
you wait *(looks him up and down)*. We'll cut your ball
off before you have a chance... *(Struts off)*.

GAMBARI:

They must be exiled to some remote savannah. Twenty
of them from Nkoleton in Njondmezhap were packed
into one sealed truck and left in the sun to roast. It
was terrible in there

(The Etat-Major over hears him peeping).

AKONCHONG:

Peace and calm. Law and order... Alcohol and
tranquilisers to take care of the rest... You see
throughout my career I have only killed fifteen maquis.
A lot of them just passed out-in my custody.

GAMBARI:

Admit you are still frightened... my francophonie is
better than yours... See? I oppress, therefore I am...
With a sharp machet you cut the woman's buttocks and
her *(himihimi)*... like this *(The Etat-Major cranes his
neck)*.

AKONCHONG:

So you come from Amnesty international?

GAMBARI:

We'll answer your inquiries with hostile silence...
Condolences *(pause)*. Madam I wish we would
understand one another in this place!

AKONCHONG:

We are through with that era of political banditry, oppression and organised terror... For instance the army will secrete itself into every nook and corner to rigorously moralize the nation (*hems*) with bulldozers...

You want trouble, you will get trouble. By the powers conferred on me by the deity of state of Agidigidi

GAMBARI:

Check your information from your provincial bishop, They will always pray for our long political life...And stop behaving like those monkeys: Ignorant imbeciles unhappy and wretched Biafrans who side with crackpots... I warn you we shall stimulate your memory. And we shall exhibit no atom of weakness (*pause*). If I were to return like an animal I will come back as a hyena - you see - it is a symbol of war!

(The major stares at them opened mouthed).

AKONCHONG:

(to Amnesty "officials"). But you can see that the army is here to protect these people from themselves. Anglos are themselves traitors and slaves. Always at war with National unity!

GAMBARI:

We can only fight the present menace of imported ideologies by being ruthless... We deal with troubles one by one...No to precipitated Freedom! What is their grievance... See? They don't have mathematics... we have brought them mathematics as never before... Have you memorized *Le vraie Eglise*...

AKONCHONG:

(Struts round "the prisoner"). How is your state of mind?

GAMBARI:

(Feigning sadness). For a ruined man, I am holding up pretty well...

AKONCHONG:

Well, we could booby-trap you. And you won't complain because you have nothing to show...

ABESSOLLO:

(aside). How come? My exact words! and with that *(Well!)*... C'est formidable!

GAMBARI:

(in a didactic tone). Just as there can be no peace without liberty; there can be no intelligence without science. Anglos what are your grievances against National Integration then?

AKONCHONG:

We have recruited frenchmen of sciences to civilize you yet your secessionist brains have rejected all medicines... What is your grievance... Ph.D Doctor... Too much English... Too much anglais-Biafré!

(The Etat-Major, co-executor of the rule of law, completely carried in, draws near, smiling approval).

GAMBARI:

You are bandying words with me? Are you serious? We will lock you up in deep holes covered with plastic sheeting that block out light.

ABESSOLLO:

(gapes at them opened-mouthed, aside). A genius!

GAMBARI:

The country must be of one piece... The traffic of ideas must flow one way. National unity. A country of steel. Monolithic *(pause)*. Are you so little of memory? You forget that you must face the firing squad of academic and administrative equivalence?

ABESSOLLO:

(open-mouthed, aside). Oh la! la!

GAMBARI:

Just wait... See? Independence less animals. When I am on the offensive with my army and police, I am absolutely relentless... Shikena!

AKONCHONG:

("fanfare" of motorcade). I'll delegate orders not responsibility... Don't waste power... Drown them!

GAMBARI:

Terror of imperialism, Divine comrade. Font of light! Defeater of the secessionist enemies of the nation! Hero of Heroes! The first and last in heaven from purgatory?

(Akonchong takes on the divine pose of font of light as "camera" clicks).

Nugget of Paradise... Great Master... Shining Example... Great Moderator! Lead us! Warrior of Sowetan innocents! Perestroika Founder! The great Partyist!

AKONCHONG:

(inspects guard of honour, climbs platform after 99.99% electoral victory - a landslide). To shoot them will be a waste of gunpowder... *(adjusts "spectacles").* Up to now there is no other candidate... I said if you don't like it I will resign... but you are running after me. *(turns to the "foreign" Ambassadors on the dias).* They agree they'll like me back, *(pause).* You saw the delegates openly crying... *(pause).* I am still having difficulty consoling them... Ninety-five percent of my supporters are found in the rural areas, you see? *(pause).* I will not resign, my government will not resign because I was elected not by the opposition but by all the people of the state of Agidigidi.

(The Etat-Major listens in respectful silence).

GAMBARI:

(as national radio). Great master... Perestroika Emperor! Blah! Blah! Blah! Great miracle of Africa Blah! Blah! Blah! Speaker of the continent! UNO! Democratic Intellectual! Author of *Le vraie Eglise*... Wa-a ding sonara money? Essamba! Essamba! Essamba!

ABESSOLLO:

(aside). Pseudo-Biafrans are excellent in the evil art of mockery!

(Gambari coughs to coax the "Messiah" on. Akonchong stares at the unseen microphones... He hands over the national purse to "Swiss Banker" Calls forward the official praise singer, the cross-eyed Assnought Ngongo).

GAMBARI:

(as Assnought). Hater of Corrupt men! Scourge of foreign monopolies! O sane and sacred Buddha! O lustrous stars! God's Easter gift to a formerly sad people! Comrade of the pyramids of Egypt! Contributor and pointing rod to the hanging gardens of Agidigidi more handsome and taller than the statue of Jupiter! His work of national cohesion greater than the colossus of Rhodes! Peace and calm is the Talmud! Miracle of the Torah! *("exhausted", "faints")*.

(Akonchong in fits of dangerous depression moves back and forth from anger to tranquility. As they both collapse into laughter, voice of the Major rings out).

ABESSOLLO:

Bloody liars, I tell you! This is the work of private and professional rumour-mongers; the trademark of unintelligent people *(pause)*. I order your arrest!

AKONCHONG:

Why?

(Action is frozen as Gambari now turns to Akonchong, Speaking in Hausa).

GAMBARI:

Karo da kara sai rago, dan akuya ba za ya iya ba.

AKONCHONG:

(translates for audience). Mallam Gambari my toron giwa *(big male elephant)* says: Only a ram can fight hard, a he-goat can't: Ponder over mallam's words my friends!! *(They are taken off by the omnipresent CENER "boys").*

ABESSOLLO:

(To audience). They're happy. You see if we could understand ourselves, There would be no need for hostilities... They were happy ... they are for the economic crises and secret bank accounts *(significantly)*. And that is a subversive attitude *(in a lecturing tone)*. We have minds of whitemen... We said: come... Be integrated into our romantic culture... *(flourishes a sheet of paper)*. Unemployment will dance "Belly sumbu" with you... *(demonstrating)*. Likeh this... likeh that... eego... eego... advance... Encore!... Quite correct! *(cheering from off)*. Hm; what are the professional hand-clapping Zombies of the terrible Babatoura regime hew-hawing about? *(short pause, then with envy on his voice)*. Killers of people's unity who always win... Bellysumbu: Likeh-this-Zeem-Zeem - Advance... Amot, za-a di money oweh... Encore! Eloko this! Amot, Encore! Eloko that! *(in a mixture of pidgin and proper English he addresses audience)*. I don't enjoy drawing blood, you see. But, you can see that Anglos make Government annoyed successfully... Throughtout my career, I have only killed seventeen people... I don't enjoy drawing blood, you see. After I killed the fifteenth anglos-student... With my gorilles. We went to one joint... Fine fine girls are there. And there was that man whose wife with a sharp matchet I had cut her himihimi... There the fool was

looking at me in that strange way... His eyes were sending daggers through me... Come on, you know like a pair of land-rover eyes ferretting out a criminal in the dark... Wetin, you dey craze? I go shoot you, O! I say to him. But the fool he kept on staring at me in that queer way... You see? At the CENER training school: I had been the torturer's dream... I don't enjoy drawing blood, you see!... so, that night I handcuffed him, those eyes staring at me like eyes of the dead after Njindoum and Lac Nyos... I fired at him Human beings life is funny. After a time this man just give up... But tomorrow must be a bad day (*as he retreats, meditates, enjoys a private joke*). One century or not even Akhikrikirii can't boast of a more formidable bunker!

FADE OUT

FIRST MOVEMENT

SCENE II

PLACE: *Central Market of Agidigidi, Iduote motor park food stalls etc.*

As mendicant starvelings, the ex-academics, Akorichong and Gambari, though looking gaunt are surprisingly cheerful... As head porters of leader of market women, they should be seen carrying vegetables and other farm products to her stall..

Activity: Drumming and ululations of market women..

Madam Patriot makes her appearance surrounded by the "ears" and "eyes" of the state..

MADAM PATRIOT:

(in tones of anger). Why can't you find something to do, some work, instead of this...

GAMBARI:

What do you think this is, playing? This is serious work, Comrade! Citizens! Citoyen! Toron giwa. Your head like a kalagu drum... Shikena!

(Silence reigns for a moment).

MADAM PATRIOT:

They'll never learn to keep their opinions to themselves.

AKONCHONG:

Since Agidigi is always after quick results, we take part-time when the trains arrive or depart especially now that the economy is in ruins. It is mad!

LEADER OF MARKET WOMEN:

(sharply). I must warn you, no grammar today *(takes up her head - sees madam Patriot, sighs dreamily)*. Ah! Big sister-in power... There is so much luxury in the midst of all these *(spreading her hands)*.... Ah! Prices are beyond all comprehension...

GAMBARI:

And non fraternity members are accused of being lazy. Ogboni!

(Silence reigns for a moment).

MADAM PATRIOT:

(with a cry of alarm). Are our enemies not your enemies, Comrade?

LEADER OF MARKET WOMEN:

Are my enemies not your enemies, Comrade? *(sighs)*. The consciousness of Agidigidi whose teachings we rely on has warned against disunity and counter revolutionary tendencies.

MADAM PATRIOT:

(smoothly). Have you remoulded yourself by self criticism? *(pointing to the unemployed academics)*. Is disguised unemployment a positive tendency...

LEADER OF MARKET WOMEN:

(with heat). Don't take me for a fool, my friend. These two are free men. They've been cleared by the Police Tribunal.

AKONCHONG:

(as the major). Ah, *(hems)* There have been reports that they're no longer hard of hearing but come to Documentation and you'll hear what happened.

MADAM PATRIOT:

A crank and a nuisance...

GAMBARI:

(derisive laughter). With peace and unity standing at one million percent by intimidation and coercion *(hems)*, lock up secessionist die-hards for their own martyrdom? Impossible!... Shoot them!

AKONCHONG:

(makes a rude noise). Le droit de talion. An eye for an eye. As Hector Petersen killed in Soweto. And like Benjamin Moloise.

Madam Patriot works herself into a rage as leader of market women draws herself up proudly... The play within the play continues: There should be no break in action whatsoever.

GAMBARI:

Dr. Akonchong the Airflow De Soto Nsimalen or the air-con limo Sir?... Limo Sah for Nsimalen brrrrrh! brram! brrrrrh! *(They "climb" by way of a lift, as they arrive the good doctor jumps into the Leader of Market Women's stall)*. Phone Doktor Dogitah Sah *(this said*

with a fawning attitude as Dr. Akonchong takes up the overnight dishes and begins to wash them furiously - as worker and others cue in - roar of laughter.

Leader of the market women break into song.

SONG OF THE NEW MEN. I am not corrupt I'm new. Like a new sheet. I'm not corrupt, I' shine. And can moralize. Refrain from all: Then match your words with action!

Crowd grows bigger. They surround and boo Madam Patriot who makes her exit, threatening... As unemployed academics go into play-acting; the others take their seats and turn the marketplace into a playground complete with audience as participants.

AKONCHONG:

(inspects the disaster areas. Confidentially to a trusted aide). We'll give them all the information but the only thing they'll not get is a true explanation (Hems, with the tone of Amnesty Officer). Was a journalist beaten and given electric shocks? Were prisoners made to crawl naked over rough ground and had urine over them?... Was a broadcaster who asked for water instead, (demonstrating). had boiling water poured on his head?

GAMBARI:

(Bowing stiffly), Your Excellency!

Posing for congratulations: they smile broadly for the cameras and touch glasses.

AKONCHONG:

Ambassador!

GAMBARI:

(bowing stiffly): One cannot see what this foreign miseducated ideologues have done to your country without feeling even more strongly the necessity for our common democratic solidarity.

AKONCHONG:

(stiffly). Your Excellency Mr. Cracker Crookster, we embrace all pioneers of Democracy (*pronounced Demoncrazy*). to plough now when Paradise is still a virgin... Mr. Ambassador Paradise-Agidi is fertile (*confidentially*). A fertile virgin! And very juicy!

GAMBARI:

We have confidence in you (*beaming broadly for the cameras*). With Agidigidi we are at ease...

LEADER OF MARKET WOMEN:

They'll always be at ease so long as our independence is merely a scrap of French toilet paper. (*As L.M.W looks away Gambari dives into her stall and makes away with a piece of akra-cake... she makes half-hearted attempts at pursuit*).

GAMBARI/AKONCHONG:

(singing). Whose scrap of indepenence is from Mami Wayo's stall, will escape with a bloodied arm from Mami Wayo's pounding mill.

LEADER OF MARKET WOMEN:

(in feigned anger). Look here you blackmailer. I pay you three times more than the latest decree on wages for head-porters. And to add: stuff you with a large mound of achu meal with two hefty pieces of kanda daily!

GAMBARI/AKONCHONG:

(in a choking voice). We'll look for work Mami Wayo...

LEADER OF MARKET WOMEN:

You have said that since the day you came here - three years ago.

AKONCHONG:

(soberly). We'll make it up, we haven't done much except eat your food...

LEADER OF MARKET WOMEN:

We'll make it up. We'll make it up. Until decree number one million-hung breaks you like this... (*Muttering to herself*). Chop a chop monkey pass monkey... Awoof no get bone.

AKONCHONG:

(*re-living the futile interviews - changes tone*). But I said you must wait... We are not in a hurry... Ah, you already look so happy?... Well, well, are the soles of your shoes worn out yet?

ANOTHER MARKET WOMAN:

The bloody bastards. The devil has more humanity than them.

AKONCHONG:

(*frustrated, dejected*). Mami Wayo you should add us more kanda...

GAMBARI:

Or multiple sclerosis will soon take over the body (*demonstrating*) and tear it like a dry rag.

AKONCHONG:

(*wisely*). We know we can't make it up to the meat dish...

GAMBARI:

(*in a placatory tone*). Your Highness you and I'll meet them eyeball to eyeball... Lousy troubleweavers!

AKONCHONG:

(*reads*). Our ideology is one simple truth: Human rights! But the transnationals with their local appendages say: Since African brains cease to grow beyond childhood an alternative government-in-waiting does not accord with the African tradition of national unity and peace... So (*points to an imaginary African stooge*). We'll stash your 10% in a foreign bank.

(History of African neo-colonial slavery is dramatized... Evolués & stooges hail colonial master. Silence reigns for a moment).

GAMBARI:

(as a stooge of the west). If you want me to rule here (hems) in peace not in pieces - you must make me safe as a leader (with disarming sincerity). I have great difficulty in ruling... When you are here to stay indefinitely, I will no longer bother myself with anything but I will sleep all day long... (with a lackey's after

thought). Come with enough gunpowder and flintocks *(pause)*. What do I tell those baying nitwits?

AKONCHONG:

There'll be employment for all by the year 2000... If they are hard of hearing ones among them raise Mami Wayo's placard.

GAMBARI:

("reads"). GO COME TOMMORROW...

LEADER OF MARKET WOMEN:

EMPLOYMENT NODEY TOHDAY! Dambrubah shegel

Laughter. It is L.M.W who catches sight of the taciturn face of the poet whose distant eyes survey the audience sadly; She and the others dance round him in awe. They shower him with gifts - then - into role-playing... Exit poet.

GAMBARI:

(adjusting "microphone"). We condemn certain enemy newspapers who had confused a few irrelevant death penalties for common law offences with a supposed people uprising *(the timbre of his voice shaking)*. I say: NITWITS!

LEADER OF MARKET WOMEN:

And I had said: If you insist on meat you'll be pawning your arm at the butcher's shop one of these days. *The poet as Mandela makes his appearance; remains unobserved - at a corner.*

ANOTHER MARKET WOMAN:

Couldn't they bribe them? Frog-bureaucrats like living above their incomes. They go into role-playing before audience-participants.

AKONCHONG:

You're a crook.

GAMBARI:

(stage-whisper). You haven't watched the masters in action.

AKONCHONG:

(thoughtfully). A very strange man, your so-called Dr. Akonchong Subversive Doctor!... Subversive of subversives... *(reads)*. The people must defy arrests and imprisonment since their cause is true and just.

GAMBARI:

(with ire). How dare your Dr. Akonchong defy the entire cabinet by refusing to purge himself of his heinous conspiracy with outside provocateurs, eh? *(reads from thesis)*. We must transform an unpopular army into a revolutionary corp, resolutely committed on the side of the people to fight against under-development in the political socio-economic and operational fields. *(pause)*. A brutal and vicious polemic-by a mad dog-that indirectly assaults the benevolent finger that fed it.

AKONCHONG:

May I presume that that is an odious; a most repellent portion from this communist thug's thesis? ... Your Excellency the Swiss Banker continue - but with contempt for the whole dunghill...

GAMBARI:

(changes tone). But you can see this jerk's reasons are all malardy.

AKONCHONG:

He is digging himself into a hole, your Excellency (*.. changes tone, in a tantrum*). They are entitled to make the Mandama baboons of the Waza Park their beneficiaries if they want, but by AMORC, these counterfeit reformers have no right to dawdle into divine affairs of political economy...

LEADER OF MARKET WOMEN:

(in mock anger). Wicked insinuations! Eh! These insane fellows are demanding the public trials of eminent citizens who selflessly served Agidigidi from independence... see? Dreamers!

ANOTHER MARKET WOMAN:

They fear dreamers who dream with their eyes open.

The Poet shakes his head in sympathy.

AKONCHONG:

(with martial fervor). Just you wait, we'll transmit our command to Infantry... We'll fill your body full of lead. So full of lead your secessionist carcass won't float in the Manyu.

LEADER OF MARKET WOMEN:

(sighs). They'll always resent you for becoming somebody without being indebted to them.

GAMBARI:

(with a torturer's zeal). But before then we'll get them wet with their own blood. We'll spray their brains with liquid ice... How dare they brand us yesmen and alleluia choristers, eh?

AKONCHONG:

We will grap you. We will toy with you. And then we will grind you like this...

ANOTHER MARKET WOMAN:

(makes a spitting noise). Thanks to the grim leadership of the Miracle of Agidigidi the Ever-lasting Dunce Consciousness of my Arse!

Derisive laughter accompanied by cheering and loud drumming.

GAMBARI:

To him you're a non-person. I say we'll wipe you out first before we telephone our benefactor Deehaul and Dumphidou Le Pen... We'll find your collaborators and silence them. Shikena!

AKONCHONG:

(gleefully to audience): Several hundred former detainees who were released and returned to their decomposing villages are now, thankfully, under Protective... *(He lowers his trousers; turns his backside to audience...)* Condolences!

ANOTHER MARKET WOMAN:

Condolences! *(confides to a pro Western "correspondent".* Our policy is Benevolent Epicureanitarianism *(Applause).* Aid! Aid! I say... Aid... in Cash! *(Brief pause).* We do not, we will never pursue the youths into the bhang... into the wicked arms of marihuana-communism... Aid... Aid... In CASH. *(pause).* In our Fifty-year Economic Leap-Forward we will provide as never before...

ALL:

Less education but more alcohol!! (*pronounced alcoool!!*)

ANOTHER MARKET WOMAN:

We have not polluted the independence of the Judiciary.
What do you want a national conference for?... It is
nothing! L'Adigidigi est un état multi-national

ALL:

We do so swear...

(*All burst out laughing*).

ANOTHER MARKET WOMAN:

We have given a shot in the arm of the epileptic
Judiciary... And if the national security is an elite corps
it is because...

ALL:

We see neither misery nor unemployment in Agidigidi.
Food is plenty. We are self-sufficient? And democratic!

(*They burst out in derisive laughter*).

LEADER OF MARKET WOMEN:

(*vigorously*). Our laws are made by the corrupt rich to
protect the corrupt rich from the justified anger of the
poor; the wretched amidst so much luxury. People breed
their leaders. Akhikrikirii was forced down our throat.

A WORKER:

(*shrugs*). Man pass man. Never say die. Nothing pass
God. Opportunity comes but once; why worry? But na
only one tribe go chop? Okay, na tiny issue!

GAMBARI:

(*with pique*) There's more: We demand total obedience
as a price for justice, advancement and the rule of law.

THE POET:

(forcefully). The logic of force has never solved the problem of hunger, fear, unemployment and the lack of freedom.

From off ululations. Enter Woman who leads a group of AWOL soldiers, workers and peasants onto scene. Victory dance.

WOMAN:

(addressing group of penitent soldiers). You cast your manhood, your pearls before robbers. You have lived off the backs of your own people - crumb-boys to those who turned their own fatherland into a successful neo-colony... By standing aloof from the struggle, you squelch the seed of the struggle.

ABESSOLLO:

(speaking into a loudhailer from off). Mere alarmists! Utter falsehood and slander... You are only heading towards disaster... I must warn you of this illegal gathering. We will destroy whatever stands on the path of the speech-making event... *(still off)*. We do not take

prisoners! All arms on the deck against Boerdog Botha!... Are you against us?

WOMAN:

(still to soldiers). You toiled for those who sucked the blood of the people... They'll never be satisfied with the profits they reap from your toil. They have drained out the blood of the people and have pumped in the embalming syrup of misery, ignorance and fear.

There is commotion as Etat-Major. Abessollo enters with pistol at the ready; gives Student a contemptuous - once over, then elaborately ignores him. Then pockets his pistol.

ABESSOLLO:

(looking up and down the street and shouting). It will be tit for tat. We will go for the jugular.

(The Major makes a gun with his fingers and shoots them both at imaginary troublemakers.)

WOMAN:

(Decisively). If we don't slay the enemy we will not be free!

Tumultuous cheering from the people.

ABESSOLLO:

(addressing Woman and throwing his rank at her). You're surely not taking this extremely minor, this very negligible episode as an opportunity to bathe yourself in publicity?

STUDENT:

(in mock-seriousness). We have instruments the Great and Indefatigable Historian of the Tribe will use at suitable moments. We must not insult History and the tireless carvers of its niches...

ABESSOLLO:

(in a fit of temper addressing student). I must warn you, you drunk and chronic liar... we know that you become uncontrollably dangerous when you are drunk!

STUDENT:

I promised not to report back on you.

ABESSOLLO:

(giving him a long puzzled stare). We will pour cement clog into your asshole! We'll block your nostrils with boiling tar! We'll feed you with your own testicles!

LEADER OF MARKET WOMEN:

(needling the Major). After his execution the Paraclete must capture his soul

STUDENT:

And may he commune with the dead - in a tomb!

ABESSOLLO:

Where did you get that idea?

Mocking laughter. The Major makes as if to speak but says nothing... He begins humming a martial tune in a low voice.

WOMAN:

There can be no way for the people outside of revolutionary action! We fool ourselves if we believe that these parasites care for us!

ABESSOLLO:

(draws near Student pistol at the ready). Don't force me to be tough. You know I can be tough... All right. All right. Where is the proud man who had a bullet through his heart?

WOMAN:

(fiercely). Drop that thing you hired thug!

(The crowd hems round the Major).

ABESSOLLO:

(his early bluster gone). Where are your war wounds? We know that you have contact with enemies of Agidigidi..

MANDELA AS POET:

(primly). I wish we had.

ABESSOLLO:

Certified lunatic! Back to Detention!

MANDELA AS POET:

Let's put an end to this playacting!

WOMAN:

Andze Abessollo, Murderous Coxcomb!

In their frenzied anger as they get at him. The Etat-Major Andze Abessollo pitches face down wards; before he can move his jubilant assailants snatch his gun, pointing it at him... He sits up puts his face in his hands and begins to cry.

MUSIC AS CURTAIN FALLS. SLOWLY

SECOND MOVEMENT: RED IS THE ROAD TO IDUOTE

Final Preparations for the Great Gathering within the shrine: The Miracle of Agidigidi confides with his foreign brothers i.e. Ambassador Cracker, Crookster and Swiss Banker.

Outside Iduote State Shrine: Poet of the People, former infantrymen, Women, Workers etc have surrounded Marble Palace.

AKIIKIKRIKII:

(bellowing). NGONGO!!

AMBASSADOR:

(aside). Them niggers uh? Arsenought indeed... a real ass in the arsc of an ass.

NGONGO:

Miracle! *(bows).* Under your inventive genius as night and day weave your songs, we are recovering from the cancerous ulcer of which the nation was bed-ridden! So healthy, so sweet and strong. How lovely to sing in the daylight sunshine of your benevolence; flow the oceans of your children under your multi-magnificence!

AKIIKRIKRII:

(benignly). There is evidence here for a Nobel Prize, eh?
(smugly). I nourish such evidence... I will bless his
candidature after the great gathering of confrontation
against Boerdog Botha.

AMBASSADOR:

A wonderful composition *(rapturously)*. A great anthem!

SWISS BANKER:

A gifted negro... and a poet!

ATANGANA:

May redemption come right here! Now! May his speech
slaughter Botha!

ALL:

Amen! Amen!

ATANGANA:

(in demented hysteria). May the dove descend on him
right here, now! NOW! Against Botha!

ALL:

(on cue). Amen! NOW! AM-EN. Against B-O-T-H-A!

ATANGANA:

Right here! NOW! Right here!

ALL:

Amen! Am-en!!! Botha Die! Botha Die! Economic
Crisis Die!

AKHIKRIKRII:

Before me now! *(the insane glare in his eyes)*. I decree:
NOW! Let me kill Botha! Now! Kill the Crisis now!

ATANGANA:

(quicker tempo). Before him! Now! Before Saviour Now!
Slaughter Botha who gave us the economic crisis, now!

ALL:

(quicker tempo). Amen! Amen!

ATANGANA:

(quicker tempo). Destroy his enemies and the crisis!

ALL:

(quicker tempo). Amen! Amen! Crucify his ambitious enemies! Impale Botha and the economic crisis!

NGONGO:

(regaining the initiative after the collective hysteria). Far be it from me not to take down for World Encyclopedia of Modern History the thoughts of the Anointed... *(takes out his pen, puts on his glasses and writes furiously... reads to his hypnotized audience.)* May the Anointed suffer his Golgotha by liberating us from our negroid juju backwardness to conquer Botha! Let us also be helped to put on French suits and Gucci shoes.

Ngongo pulls out a ream of cyclostyled print and bows before Akhikrikikii; the Great Assnought submits papers to the Great Miracle; Njunghu Akhikrikikii Njunghu. His shining Highness of Agidigidi. Sound of trumpets!

AKHIKRIKRIKII:

My last great one at the UNO *(pronounced as Unoh)*. on the pernicious and iniquitous sickle and hammer of the outlaw chap, Botha, was only five hours long...

SWISS BANKER:

(aside). A fertile subject for bleary eyed dictators to cover up their own brutal purges.

AMBASSADOR:

(beaming approval). We see in you, Sir, a creative symbol of the goal of our two but indivisible people. As the consciousness of your nation we salute your very great African culture *(whispering to Laureate)*. How long is this one, super?

NGONGA:

(very pleased with himself). Only nine and a half hours will he keep them in New York Sir *(beams)*. There's surely going to be no plant failure?

AMBASSADOR:

(beams). Glad ter meetcha *(with a friendly leer)*. Attaboy!

ATANGANA:

Writer Assnought is profoundly concerned with Butcher Botha's massive prison population... The constant theme of the very great prophetic writer. A writer of prophecies!

ALL:

(resounding and corrupt laughter). That rascal Botha.

AMBASSADOR:

(aside) Writer! Some real nought in the arse of an ass! *(in mock despair)*. On the same theme?

ATANGANA:

The Bible says the shepherd as writer must send away the wolf before taking prophetic care of the sheep. Botha is a Jew and wolf.

SWISS BANKER:

(to Assnought). What a genius! You must further the work of Switzerland in Africa.

(as Akhikrikikii meditates away, Swiss Banker drops cheque into Laureate's breast-pocket. Laureate takes out sheet - the figures bewilder him).

NGONGO:

Your Excellency the Banker *(kneels)*. The pledge of a Writer.

AMBASSADOR:

(his gifts as sincere as a crook-politician's promise). The World Negro Academy in Hegeliana, Mr. Laureate, offer you the Chair of Anthropology of Neolithic Africa...

NGONGO:

(still kneeling). I am overwhelmed!

AKIIIIKIKRIKII:

(overwhelmed with jealousy, shouting). Assnought Balaam, (the mad glare back in his eyes). Where's my good-for-nothing speech writer?

ABESSOLLO:

(from off). What does he want a lying speech-writer for?

(Etat-Major Andze Abessollo bursts in completely dishevelled. He is torn, bruised and bleeding.)

AKIIIIKIKRIKII:

Throw him in chains! (The Etat-Major controls himself with difficulty). Get him to Detention!

ABESSOLLO:

The army has gone berserk!

MADAM PATRIOT:

(coldly). How much did that evil woman pay you?

MINORITY NNYANYEN:

(voice off) Leadership means responsibility. Listen you prisoners of the French Deuxième Bureau. (with conviction). War! War! War!

(Outside the Marble Palace walls, the people break into song; accompanied by loud drumming and defiant slogans.)

VOICE (*from off*):

Dunce of Agidigidi we are waiting for your fifteen-hour speech against Botha. The over concentration of power in the hands of one man, in the hands of one tribe is one of the obvious reasons for our economic lac Nyos.

AMBASSADOR:

(listening raptly). What did the link say?

AKIIKRIKRII:

(to Ambassador with a leer). What else can the sheep of Agidigidi sing? *(listens)*. I hear them singing my praises... What?... *(with contemptuous finality)*. That must be their moronic bleating!

VOICE FROM OUTSIDE:

The people must GOVERN! HURRAH!

AKHIIKRIKRII:

(insistently). The sheep of Agidigidi are rejoicing... *(listens to the unorthodox drumming)*. The Major! Major answer! I execute you... Where are my informers!

ABESSOLLO:

They are helpless without the army.

VOICE FROM OFF:

A leader must be honest and a well-meaning nationalist!

ANOTHER VOICE (*from off*):

A leader must ensure total and genuine independence for his country! Our country must not be an appendage of Chirac's mad colonial dreams!

(Meanwhile, Assnought Ngongo who all along has been contemplating his own fatal destiny, returns the cheque to Swiss Banker. Silence; All look on dumbfounded).

AMBASSADOR:

(who knows his negro boys, incredulous). He is mad! Hold Assnought! Assnought-nought is mad!

VOICE (*off-stage*):

A leader should have the courage to punish evil doers!
Any society that does not punish evil doers is doomed!
Leadership means responsibility! We fool ourselves if
we believe that Akhikrikii's men will ever care for us!

NGONGO:

(with a fatal calmness). A word or two before you go...
before our final conclusion *(his face a marvel of
resignation)*. We the writers of Agidigidi crucified Truth.
We nurtured the tumour that has eaten us.

SWISS BANKER:

(rising in fury). Arrest him! The idiot is mad! Throw the
beast into Preventive.

AKHIKRIKII:

Who signed that decree?... I'll have to consider.

NGONGO:

As a writer, I destroyed my formula for national
salvation: Truth... I burnt it on the mediocrity pyre of
state **banquets**... Blood money in some far away
European commercial trap... to become an important
robber, into ashes I burnt away my creative soul... Now,
what can I call my *own*?

*(Drumming. Voices from outside resume in a more frenzied
rhythm Madam Patriot faints.)*

MINORITY NNYANYEN:

(extremely agitated). The whole world will shed rivers of
blood! Blood!

VOICE OF POET (*from off*):

We are tired of your kind of Peace! We want justice!
(pause). You don't have the moral fibre to discuss
South Africa!

(Cheering from the tumultuous crowd - from off).

NGONGO:

That long voice of protest pierces me (*sighs*). I had never been true to my inner self... only by destroying this fascism and establishing on its ruins a new society can the people save themselves from the horrors of neo-colonial tyrannical terror...

AMBASSADOR:

Take this man off and torture him until he reveals the name of his accomplices...

ABESSOLLO:

By what means?

AMBASSADOR:

(*points to his double-barrel, flourishes some foreign banknotes...*) By these! (*pause*). That is all I have to give...

SWISS BANKER:

I am beginning to admire your ingenuity!

VOICE OF POET:

(*from off*). You have murdered the people! You have destroyed their memory! We are here to restore the memory of a murdered people! You failed to rise above those you claimed to be leading! You lacked tact, creativity, magnanimity. Your vision was blunted. Very blunted! A leader should be one that should dream great dreams and have the courage and ability to actualise them.

NGONGO:

(*like someone in a dream*). He is the only brilliant flame that illuminates the land-scape of our dark world!

AMBASSADOR:

(*rocks forward, in a gyrating cops voice*). Hei buddy, don't ya fox around...

NGONGO:

Yes... *(resignedly)*. You can kill me but you do not own my soul. *(pause)*. Without such men our people would remain forever a people of slaves and serfs... With Mandela the people's poet, the unadulterated writer... our people will win complete emancipation from all exploitation... As I leave this stage *(there's an atmosphere of hypnotized fascination as Assnought takes out his dagger)*. I leave this world in the firm belief that you are all coming soon over yonder... What judgement will be ours in that great paradise of the true liberators of our African peoples who died because they never sold out to neo-colonial bribery *(with one decisive stroke stabs himself and as he falls)*. O my people!

WOMAN *(from off)*:

RED MUST BE THE ROAD TO IDUOTE!

TENSION

VOICES:

ONLY HIS BLOOD CAN CLEANSE THIS LAND!
Drumming, purposeful singing, marching from off... The Minister collapses. The Major observes them in his sitting position.

AKONCHONG:

(From off) Worse things could have happened here than in Pretoria the ugliest society in the world!

GAMBARI *(from off)*:

Na godé!

VOICE OF WOMAN

The colonial masters were shepherds of evil, but you've proved Lucifer himself a novice!

ALL:

We want nothing. We have come to hear you die!

AKHIKRIKRII:

(in maniacal fury as he whips out his sjambok). This is war! I declare war! Balaam Abessollo! Haba!... Haba! All my Patriots rally behind me! *Hungh! Wa-dung! Grrrr* - rrrh! This is War! Total WAR! Eighty-three percent of the rural population support me-e-e!

(TENSION!!)

SWISS BANKER:

Very well Gentlemen I have the solution.

(All crowd around him. TENSION!!)

AMBASSADOR:

Hi ya! mine gonna be the funky solution!

(All blacks shiveringly crowd around him).

SWISS BANKER:

Mine is the only solution *(enigmatically)*. Oppression, perjury, fraud... Oil money, STABEX, ONCPB.

(All crowd around him, frightened).

AMBASSADOR:

(whips out his double-barrel). You naughty evil niggers, I say mine is the onliest solution... Jetty black faces you shore Gawd are... Naw?

(All crowd around him, completely cowered).

We gonna bomb our way out of here Lac Nyos-style... got it? Thick-lipped Hegelian ape-man; you got it?... Once in the Angel Empire we own the billions in code from Swiss... Bank Lazar!

SWISS BANKER:

(raising himself up proudly). It makes no SENSE. The whole country is barren! Totally Bankrupt!... We hold

the key... The laws... The laws of international banking, my friends... Their economy is in ruins. In tatters - for now! (*pause*). The Sphinx from the Elysée should know. Typical of evil people everywhere.

AKIIKIKRIKII:

International War! Haba! Haba! Third World War! Grrrrrrr-rrh! Grrrrrrr-rrh! My pineapple farms, Clinique Florida, Poultry Farms, Wine breweries... Money abui, oweh! Essamba! Essamba! Essamba!!

ABESSOLLO:

(*enigmatically to Ambassador*). They're tired of your sweet sounding sentiments of concern. (*to Njunghu*). Njunghu stop this wild talk of war. What had we ever done without the army?

AKIIKIKRIKII:

(*with maniacal hysteria*). Etat-Major Abessollo!! Mahok! De Major! If the mountain does not rise up to meet Baba Toura, why my dim-witted venal Ministers must go to the mountain... De Major! Take my lick-spitting nose-wiping Ministers to the mountain! A scorched-earth policy, I say! My poisoned arrows! Haba! Marshall General Abessollo... Promoted... Just like that... Kill them all for me! Field Marshall! Eee...grrrrh! eei-ggrrrrh! Mahok! Haba! Sonara money abui. Amot, money abui! Sonara nkap abui. Essamba! Essamba! Essamba!

ABESSOLLO:

(*still sitting down, as he addresses H.E. the Miracle enigmatically*). Njunghu, you can't go against the will of the people: the voiceless the mangled, the wretched and the deceived whose strength lies in their unity... Theirs is the only victorious and invincible party enjoying a complete monolithic unity (*yawns tiredly*). They are the divined majority, the steel of Revolution! (*pause*). Where should I begin? It is a battle of the entire nation against the dark forces of tyranny, tribalism and greed which we incarnated.

VOICE OF WOMAN:

Come down from your cross thief and murderous robber
Akhikrikirii wa Njunghu. *Dwarfish* Thug in a Messiah's
Robe! *(pause)*. If you had the fear of God, nobody
would have looted the treasury. Satan!

(Cheering from outside).

VOICE OF POET AS MANDELA:

You made falsehood and moronic revelry your region of
convenience *(pause)*. Such a corrupt and tyrannical
kleptocracy!

VOICE OF WOMAN:

Get down from that cross, thief Akhikrikirii Njunghu
with your Government without justice or you'll know
me when I get you!

ALL *(offstage)*:

WE WANT NOTHING! WE HAVE COME TO
HEAR YOU DIE!! ONLY YOUR BLOOD CAN
CLEANSE THIS LAND!

VOICE OF POET AS MANDELA:

(from off but nearer). Your government has always been
above the people. You've reached the pinnacle of
slaughter and desolation where you mocked the memory
of the slain. The people are above government! Your
regime was made up of the vilest rogues and traitors.

AKHIKRIKIRII:

*(sadly to Amougou Atangana who is looking away
unhappily)*. What happened to your Yahweh's
prophecies, Pastors?

GAMBARI:

Na gode!

VOICE OF THE PEOPLE:

*Mandela! Freedom! mandela! Ablodé! Amandla Awether!
Amandla Awether!*

(Outside the Marble Shrine the collective will of the people is firmed into a revolutionary blade.

The Miracle looks at Brother Abednego Amougou Atangana, Abednego Amougou Atangana looks back at him unhappily.

ALL *(off stage)*

WE WANT NOTHING. WE HAVE COME TO HEAR YOU DIE!

AKIIKIKRIKII:

(he picks up the loaded pistol of the fainted Ambassador and points it into his own mouth.) What could I have done without a coercive army? *(voice in transition).* Under my administration I was never the corrupt one, it was the French and the corrupt civil servants I appointed into government who embezzled Sonara money, not me. My hands are clean. These opposition men, they are not fair to themselves!

Once there is a deafening explosion inside the marble shrine: Workers, Poet, Woman, etc. force their way in.
DAWN! MUSIC.

THE END

...Besong is a restless artist in search of new forms to depict the extremes of physical incarceration and the menace of times gadflies. His creative history is that of an artist who sees nothing accurate measured in the human situation. He seeks always to capture the fragments of helpless beasts in time and space, this is done not as an objective recreation of anomy but as a profound distortion of the objectivity of suffering... Indeed, in Besong's drama nothing happens, where events occur they merely serve to reinforce the author's excremental vision... Besong's theatre creates a bare, minimal stage where the gory spectacle of decimation and dumbness is elevated as the logical conclusion of an absurd and incoherent existence... No audience can come out of Besong's theatre the same. Like Soyinka, Marachera and Armah, Besong administers shock waves through the indifferent postures of presumably inattentive audience...

- Sesan Ajayi in "Arts and Books"
THE GUARDIAN ON SUNDAY



BATE BESONG was educated in elementary schools in Eastern Nigeria and in the then State of Western Cameroon. He attended St. Bede's College, Ashing, Hope Waddell Institute, Calabar, Calabar University and the University of Ibadan (U.I.).

A practising poet and experimentalist playwright, Besong has held research and teaching positions in Eastern and Northern Nigeria. He has also contributed poems and poem-sequences to journals in West Africa and London.

After the highly successful World Premiere of his docu-drama, *Beasts Of No Nation* by playwright Bole Butake and the Yaounde University Theatre, in March of 1991, Bate Besong was betrayed and arrested in the premises of Cameroon Television, C.R.T.V. Mballa II and subsequently detained on false charges of subversion.

Requiem For The Last Kaiser is his third play.

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